

ABOUT VISUAL ARTISTS

James Todd: “Jazz Icons”

Through Dec. 31 at the Holter Museum of Art in Helena

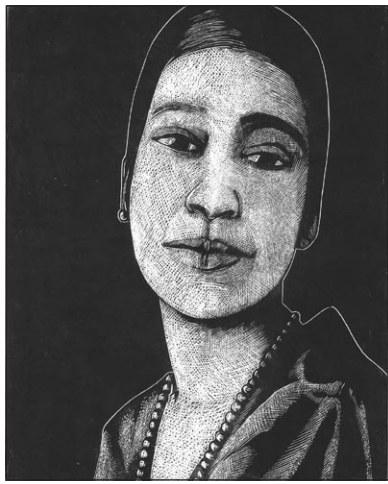
Painter and printmaker James Todd is a true Montana original. While many of his peers paint iconic Montana landscapes, Todd participates in a different tradition, one that is resolutely urban and politically engaged.

During his distinguished career he has made the conjunction of social history and the visual arts a primary focus for both his art-making and his teaching. Internationally recognized as a genuine innovator in wood engraving, he has broken stereotypes of size and content associated with the medium.

Todd grew up in Great Falls in the 1950s, where he and his brother, Mike, tuned their fine ears to jazz at local nightspots, including the Ozark Club. He taught humanities and art for 30 years at The University of Montana, Missoula, including a decade as the chair of the art department. He presently lives in Missoula.

“Jazz Icons” celebrates the men and women of jazz who hybridized purely American music. The exhibition stretches from his early high school sketches from Great Falls to the recently completed woodcut prints of “Jazz Women.” Also included are paintings of jazz greats on loan from the Montana Museum of Art and Culture and a temporary loan of “The Ozark Club” from The History Museum in Great Falls.

This exhibition is accompanied by a catalog, *Jazz Icons by James Gilbert Todd Jr.*, available for purchase in the Holter Museum Store.



“Bessie Smith” by James Todd

“A Night Out with M. Scott Miller”

Through Dec. 23 at the Missoula Art Museum, with a reception and gallery talk during “Missoula by Night,” 5-9 p.m. Nov. 15
Artist website: www.studiodmissoula.com

Missoula artist M. Scott Miller says his new series of paintings, “A Night Out,” was inspired by midnight hikes around his hometown.

The artist grew up in the Missoula — “a child of the seventies and a graduate of Sentinel High.”

He graduated from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY, and spent two decades as a freelance artist and illustrator in New York City, where he was a cover artist for *The New Yorker*, *Money* and *Metropolitan* magazines. Clients also included the *Village Voice* and the *New York Observer* newspapers and Random House Publishing.

When he moved back to Missoula in 2006, “I was amazed again at the color and light and how beautiful my hometown really is, especially at night.”

He opened Studio D in 2009 in downtown Missoula, which showcases his original paintings. “Light and color are the two reasons for my love of painting. They make me feel a certain way,” he says.

Miller also continues his commercial work, creating artwork for the 25th anniversary of the Clark Fork Coalition, illustrating posters and commemorative clothing for Bannack Days, and crafting images for local and statewide newspapers and publications.

According to curator Stephen Glueckert, the series on display at MAM reflects two concepts: “First, is the artist’s consistent selection of cityscapes and night scenes familiar to most Missoulians,” he writes. “What is so fresh in these works is that Miller has painted Missoula in a way that it has not been painted before.”

Glueckert also praises “the expertise with which he handles the medium,” in particular the airbrush technique used in these gouache paintings.

For the artist, the exhibit pays homage to a town and state he loves — “the wild, colorful, expressive life in Montana.”

Michael H. Lee: “Coming Home: Helena Area Vietnam Veterans”

Through November at the Myrna Loy Center in Helena, with a reception Nov. 9 during the Fall Art Walk

Michael Lee profiles 16 Vietnam War veterans in this photography exhibit, funded in part by a 2012 Grant to Artists from the Myrna Loy Center. Ken Inabnit, a Vietnam veteran and former aide to the Secretary of the Army for Montana, will speak during the reception Nov. 9.

The project was inspired, in part, by the reception Vietnam veterans received after returning from a controversial war. “It was quite a shock to fly into the military base to be discharged and be told that it’d be wise to get out of uniform as fast as you could, for the sake of safety,” wrote Bob Chady of the U.S.S. Arikara crew, after his third tour.

“Some returning Vietnam veterans withdrew upon coming home and slipped into obscurity,” says Lee. “The goal of many veterans was



“Coming Home: Helena Area Vietnam Veterans” by Michael Lee

to create distance, both mental and physical, from the stigma of the war. How that distance was achieved differed for every veteran.”

This project evolved by connecting to and networking with Helena-area Vietnam veterans, and trying to photograph them in work or home environments. The 16 veterans included in the show served 40-50 years ago, and range in age from 60-70. They represent but a handful of the several hundred Vietnam veterans estimated to live in Lewis and Clark County. “This exhibit is a remembrance and, I hope, a salve for some,” writes Miller.

The artist is also a veteran of that war, having served in the Navy and been sent to Vietnam in 1969. His stay there inspired his interest in photography (he bought his first serious camera in Japan on the way home). When he returned to Montana, he was a staff photographer for *The Retort*, Eastern Montana College’s student paper, prior to earning his bachelor’s degree there. He and his wife, Debbie, joined the Peace Corps and traveled to Liberia, where he continued to hone his skills.

Lee has shown his work at several venues in Helena, and at The University of Montana and the National Gallery in Monrovia, Liberia.

“Treasured” Montana Artist Sheryl Hester

Through December in the Secretary of State’s office in the State Capitol, Helena

Artist website: www.sherylhester.com

Sheryl Hester, a self-taught photographer and digital artist from Kalispell, is the most recent “Treasured” Montana Artist, selected by Secretary of State Linda McCulloch.

“Sheryl’s artistic technique is unlike anything I have seen before,” says McCulloch.

“Her interpretation of everyday images garners intrigue and makes you contemplate the benefits of exploring your own imagination.”

The artist’s initial camera-based images are significantly altered, distorted, restructured and reformatted to present a primordial landscape of abstract natural forms, which still retain the original colors and shapes of the photograph. A photograph of a bird may be digitally hand-painted to portray a horse, or a plant may be altered to resemble a person. The effect is an abstract and often whimsical design inherently connected to the people, places and things in Montana.

“Our beautiful state has always inspired me to be creative,” Hester said. “I’ve explored many forms of art in my lifetime, and this new approach offers me creative freedom that is the most rewarding.”

The fifth-generation Montanan has been a life-long resident of Kalispell. Since retiring she has built her own house, and focused more intensely on her artwork.

Her images were included in the recent Montana Triennial, on display this summer at the Missoula Art Museum.



“Fire Blanket” by Sheryl Hester

Mary Knapp: “Found Metal Finds Fused Glass”

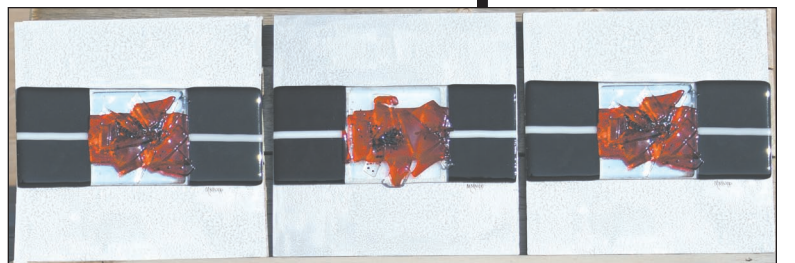
Nov. 16-Dec. 19 at Two Rivers Gallery in Big Timber

Artist website: meknappstudio.com

Ballantine artist Mary Knapp shares contemporary fused-glass works in this two-person show, which also features works by Malta sculptor Peggy Ames Nerud. Knapp, who spent 28 years teaching art at the Huntley Project Elementary School, retired in May 2010 to make art in her home studio. “For the past three years, I have concentrated on problem solving, creative thinking and most of all, risk taking daily to create original aesthetic visions using glass,” she says.

The artist began learning the process of fusing and slumping glass more than a decade ago, and her works now combine the ancient medium of glass with the modern feel of metal. Elements of collage allow her to add color, texture and contrast to three-dimensional works that include large wall hangings, free-standing pieces and glass-top metal end tables.

Her art is displayed in galleries throughout Montana and in Key West, FL, and was featured in a show at the Amsterdam Whitney Art Gallery in New York City in December 2009 and at the Red Dot Art Fair in March 2010 in Soho, NY.



Wallhanging by Mary Knapp



19

Send your submissions for About Visual Arts

With About Visual Arts, *State of the Arts* continues to profile living Montana artists (no students, please), whose work is the focus of a current exhibit (on display during some portion of the two months covered by the current issue of *State of the Arts*).

Submissions must include:

- A digital image of the artist’s work, with title of the piece;
- A brief bio and description of the artist’s work (up to 300 words);
- Dates and title of exhibit; and
- The gallery or museum name, town and phone number.

MAC will select submissions that reflect a cross-section of gender, geography, styles and ethnicity, and are from a mix of public and private galleries and museums.

Deadline for submissions for the January/February is Dec. 1. Please send submissions to write us@livelytimes.com with About Visual Arts in the subject line.

About Artists is compiled by Kristi Niemeyer for *State of the Arts*